

FAMILY ISSUES

Domestic Violence

Teacher Notes

The curriculum committee suggests that the guest speaker format be used and that speakers include men who once battered a significant other, but have sought assistance. In addition, it is suggested that the curriculum for the Impact of Crime on Victims' class be used as a resource. In this section, participants will look at:

1. The destructive effect of violence on the family.
2. Violence as a family pattern passed from generation to generation.
3. Violence as a choice and parents can stop the cycle.
4. Violence as an unhealthy pattern.
5. How children learn to be adults by watching adults, they often handle their negative emotions (fear, anger, frustration, etc.) the same way the adults in their lives deal with these emotions.
6. How societies are often violent - e.g., war. Our society entertains itself by viewing T.V. violence for pleasure and relaxation.
7. How both partners in a relationship may add to the elements of a "battering" situation.
8. How he can better express his feelings and frustrations.

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Handout

Let's think back to early human history. For thousands of years it was the man's job to hunt for this tribe and to protect the women and children. Loyalty to the family and tribe was the most important thing.

Our world is a lot different, but family loyalty is still important.

The world can be a very tough place. It's hard to find and keep a job. It can be hard to get along with other people. It's hard to keep food on the table, to keep your family clothed and with a decent place to live. The street can be a mean place, too, full of people who will take what you've got or want to sell you something you don't need. In some ways, our world may be just as tough as the world of the hunter and warrior.

You may have to be tough to get along, to keep your job, to stay alive on the street.

You do not have to be tough with your family. Your family is where you can build up the strength to be tough when you need to be.

A family home has to be safe for everyone who lives there. You, your partner and your kids all have to know that you are not going to be hurt at home. Everyone needs a safe place to live.

It is your responsibility to make sure that your home is a safe place to live.

Some people seem to think that growing up afraid and unsafe makes you tough. They think that if you make children feel safe, secure and loved, they will be sissies. That's wrong.

Growing up safe, secure and loved makes you stronger and better able to deal with the world. It makes it easier for you to make it on your own, as an independent person.

Growing up scared just makes you scared. A scared child becomes a scared adult. He may hide his fear behind pretending to be a tough guy, but he isn't.

Holding and loving a child doesn't make him weak any more than being mean to him makes him strong.

Handout (Continued)

Let's talk about how you build a safe place for people to live. Depending on where you live, you may have to provide some active protection against the crime, drugs and other harmful things on the street. You may have to have locks and even bars on the windows and doors. You may have to be prepared to personally protect your family.

The most important thing, though, has to do with how family members behave toward each other. You can talk, criticize, or even yell at each other, but there has to be a rule - no one in the family will physically hurt another member of the family.

No one respects a man who beats up women and children. A man is supposed to protect his family, no hurt them. A man who hurts his family will tend to get very lonely. Other men, although they may not say anything to his face, will not want to be his friends.

Eventually, of course, the man may find himself in trouble with the law. As far as the courts go, beating up your wife or child is an assault. You have no special right to hit other family members. It's against the law and the consequences are serious.

Some men abuse children without beating them up. I don't mean yelling at them - I mean something much more serious. Some men have sex with children - young children, even their own sons and daughters.

Sexual abuse of children is very wrong. Sexual abuse can include touching children in a sexual way, as well as having sex with them. You might be surprised to know how much sexual abuse goes on.

Sexual abuse is against the law too. Actually, of course, sexual abusers are people with mental problems who need to get help before they hurt somebody.

Men sometimes seem to think of women as their property. It's like they "own" their wife or girlfriend. They think that this gives them the right to hit the woman. This is wrong. Women are people. They have the same rights that you have. You do not "own" a person.

Children are people, too. You do - and should - have a lot of control over them, but you have no right to hit them.

Handout (Continued)

Threatening to hit your family members is almost as bad as hitting them. If any member of your family is afraid of you or of being at home, it makes your home less safe for everyone. Your family is not supposed to be afraid of you. When you say that you "respect" someone, does that mean you are afraid of them? What is the difference between fear and respect.

Respect is something you earn by being a fair and trustworthy person. You win respect by treating people honestly and fairly. You can get people to fear you by threatening them. People don't like people who make them afraid. Fear is not respect.

Family members should be able to respect each other, but they shouldn't have to fear each other. If you want to be respected, though, you have to earn it. You earn it by being fair and doing what you say you will do. You earn respect by listening to what others have to say and trying to understand where they're coming from. Can you think of other ways to earn respect?

Remember:

1. Don't hit on your family!
2. It's your responsibility to make your home safe for everyone who live there.
3. Women and children have rights, too.
4. Threatening to hurt your family is wrong.
5. It's easy to make a child fear you. You have to earn respect.

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Domestic Violence

Teacher Notes

There are many styles of discussion, argument and fighting within families. Many of these styles are based by what ethnic, cultural, religious, or other world views we hold. More importantly, all of these things can become second nature; that is, we don't think about them. They are subconscious. Very little of what is important from our past is lost from our memory.

But it can be avoided. Explain that we naturally avoid pain and that unpleasant memories are painful! Explain, furthermore, that just because we avoid remembering things does not mean they do not have an effect on our present life. They do!

To illustrate the meaning of subconscious;

1. Define the work.
2. Give examples of beliefs, routine behaviors, etc., performed by rote.
3. Ask students to pay particular attention to their left elbow. Until the teacher asked them to do this, their left elbow (and what it might be feeling) was not consciously thought of. Once this is brought to the persons attention, it can be actively dealt with. Relate the "elbow" example to how our past history is also put away, and not thought of until someone or something brings it into consciousness.
4. Have students complete corresponding assignment.

To solicit examples of subconsciously stored learning and generate understanding of this topic ask students to describe, in detail, how they wash a car. Do they start at the front bumper, top of hood, side doors? Who taught them this? Did they actually get instructions or did they learn from example?

FAMILY ISSUES

Domestic Violence

THE FIRST BLOW

Teacher Note

The Teacher should stress that never hit on your family means **never**. Walk before you lose it and deal with it later. You don't own your girlfriend. Dancing with someone else isn't that big of a deal. She shouldn't hit you, but people do things they wouldn't do otherwise when they're drinking. You do have a right to be angry at her and should tell her so when you're both sober. She has no more right to hit you than you have to hit her.

Note: You may find yourself all alone on this issue. Young Men sometimes respond to this story in an extreme way.

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Domestic Violence

Handout: THE FIRST BLOW

You and your girlfriend don't get to go out very often. Since the kid came, you've been stuck at the house most of the time. It's gotten to where you argue all the time, usually over nothing.

One night you get your mother to baby-sit so you can go out. You have a good time, though both of you have a little too much to drink.

Late in the evening you're sitting at a table in this bar. This other guy asks her if she wants to dance. She says okay and dances with him.

You're really mad. You feel that she's with you and shouldn't dance with somebody else. When she comes back, you tell her that you're going home right now.

Outside you get into an argument about what happened. Maybe because you're a little high, you say a few things you shouldn't. When you call her a whore, she just loses it and slaps you right across the face.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think would happen now?
2. Would you hit her?
3. What should you do?

FAMILY ISSUES

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Assignment

1. Who wins (won) the fights in your house?
2. After a disagreement, what happens?
3. What were your worst memories of a fight in your family?
4. Was it okay to hit in your family? Who was allowed to hit whom?
5. Is it okay to swear? Who can? Who cannot?
6. Is it okay to call people names? Who can? Who cannot?
7. Is it okay to frighten other people? Who can? Who cannot?
8. Is it okay to threaten harm to others or their property? Who threatens?

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Visit from Domestic Violence Speaker

Teacher Notes

Teacher opens session by recapping the goal for parole: to stay out of jail. "This is a difficult time. Your girlfriend or wife is pregnant or just had a baby. She can't go out drinking and partying. She may be making a lot of demands on us for attention, for presents. We have to resist pressure to get involved with people and things that will bring us down, get us locked up, or kill us. And we are going to have a real tough time. Having a tough time can make you angry, and anger can get you into serious trouble."

Teacher introduces guest speaker on domestic violence. (If this is someone from a court program or public defenders' office, facilitator should be prepared for some anger and hostility from participants with court system experience.) Tell participants that what they hear may be upsetting. "The system" isn't always fair. But (this person) is here to tell you how the system works and how you can stay out of it. This is your chance to ask some serious questions."

Speaker describes domestic violence in terms of participants' own experience. "A lot of us have been at a home where the mother and father are fighting and the police come and take them away. A lot of times this is linked to stress—like the stress we have been talking about—and it's linked to drugs and alcohol. If you are loaded, you can't control the impulse to respond with violence when someone makes you angry."

DISCUSSION. Speaker describes a typical domestic violence situation: "Someone does something really stupid to you—takes your money, calls you a liar—and you get angry. You know that if you hit this person, someone is going to call the cops and you'll both get taken in." Ask: "What can you do in this situation instead of hitting them?"

These questions should be posed to several participants. Possible answers include "walk away," "ignore it," and "you shouldn't have been hanging out there in the first place." Also "hit her anyway."

Speaker summarizes answers into options of 1) treat others with respect 2) remove yourself from the situation. "There are ways to leave. You don't have to wait until someone gets violent. If your partner starts drinking, and you know she's going to

get upset, leave before she gets violent."

Speaker moves on to outline what happens after violence occurs. "Once someone—a neighbor, you, even the assailant—calls the police, it starts a process that can't be stopped. If someone reports domestic violence to 911, then calls back to cancel the complaint, the police may come anyway to investigate." This description may elicit from participants stories of the police coming and arresting the victim instead

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Resisting Street Pressure: Recognizing Stress

Teacher Notes

Teacher opens session by stressing that participants will be apart once they parole. "You will have to make decisions without someone talking with you. Our goal is: not to lose anyone to violence or jail. Our goal is to remain near our children and participate in their lives.

Teacher may want to reference current events in the community concerning layoffs and the economic climate. Point out that there are many people with children in the community who are having a difficult time.

Teacher should refer to the negative impact that witnessing violence has on children. "Do you wonder why you get angry so easily? It may be because it's what you saw while you were growing up. Now, if you are a father, your children are watching you. That child will be what you model. You can stop that cycle right here— and that would be a good gift for any child."

Teacher ties this material to the "Me and My Girlfriend" theme: This girl is pregnant or has recently had a baby. You don't have a job yet, so you don't have any money. You want to buy things the family needs. What are your options?

DISCUSSION. Teacher asks participants to list their options for obtaining material goods. Answers may include stealing, dealing drugs, borrowing money, various scams. Participants may also, half-jokingly, suggest not taking responsibility for their children.

Facilitator recaps options: "You can sell drugs. You can steal. Both of those give you the opportunity for being locked up. Keep in mind the goal; "To Stay out of jail and near our children!!